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> 2024-25 financial year

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Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia

People not working, or working less than they prefer, including whether they want to work, are looking for work, and factors for them to start working

Reference period 2024-25 financial year

Released 5/11/2025

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Key statistics

In 2024-25:

- 1.2 million people (aged 18-75) without a (paid) job wanted a job, with 1.1 million available to either start immediately or within 4 weeks.
- The most common reason women who wanted a job were unavailable to start within 4 weeks was 'Caring for children', while for men it was 'Long-term health condition or disability'.
- 2.1 million people (aged 18 to 75) without a job did not want a job, with a further 1.8 million either retired or permanently unable to work.
- The main reason for not wanting a job was 'No need, satisfied with current arrangements' (38%).

Microdata and TableBuilder

Microdata from the Barriers and Incentives survey will be released in [TableBuilder](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder>) and [DataLab](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab>) (as a supplementary file to the [Longitudinal Labour Force](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia>)) on 19 November 2025. [TableBuilder](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder>) will

include data for financial years 2014-15 to 2024-25 and [DataLab \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab) will include data for 2014-15 to 2024-25 financial years and September quarter 2014 to June quarter 2025. For more information, refer to [Microdata and Tablebuilder: Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/barriers-and-incentives-labour-force-participation).

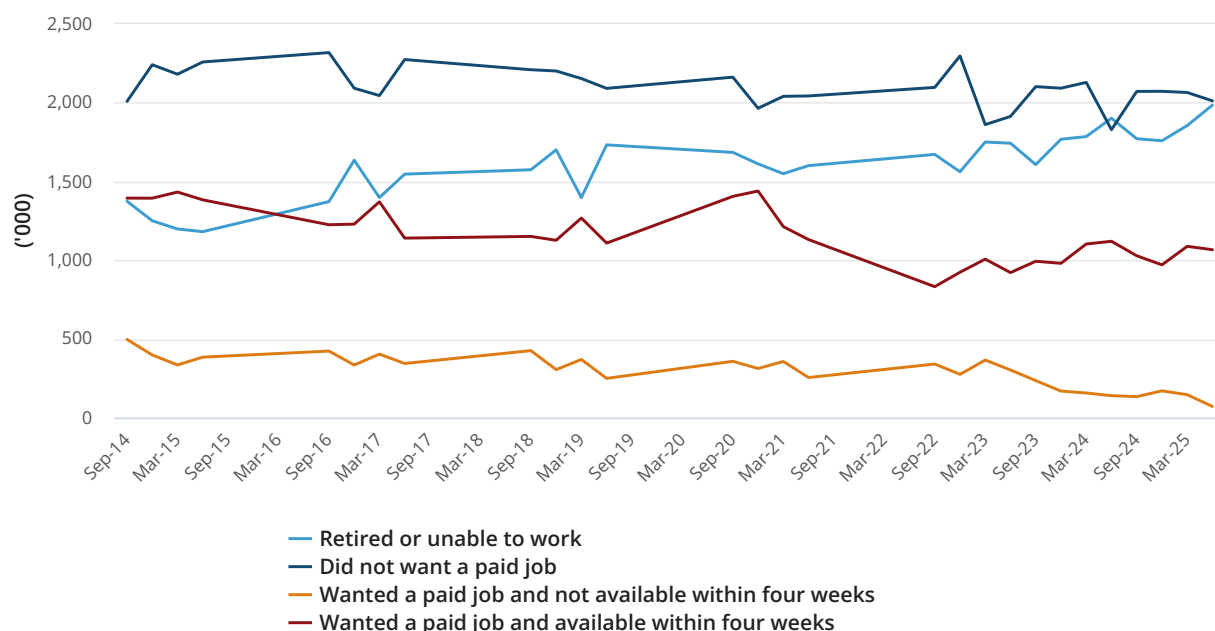
People who did not have a job

In 2024-25, there were 19 million people aged 18 to 75 years, with 14.0 million (73%) of these people employed (or had a job to start or return to). Of the people who did not have a job:

- 1.2 million people wanted a job - with 1.1 million available to start immediately (the unemployed) or within four weeks.
- 2.1 million people (who were not retired or unable to work) did not want a job.
- 1.8 million were retired or permanently unable to work.

Graph 1 shows a quarterly time series, up to the June quarter 2025, of people who did not have a job.

Graph 1 - People who did not have a job (aged 18-75)



In the June quarter 2025, of those aged 18-75 years who did not have a job, and were not retired or permanently unable to work:

- 1.9 million people had a long-term health condition, and of these, 714,100 (38%) wanted a job, up from 35% in March 2025.
- 1.2 million people had a disability, with 462,000 of these people wanting a job (38%).

Note that people can report having both a long-term health condition and a disability.

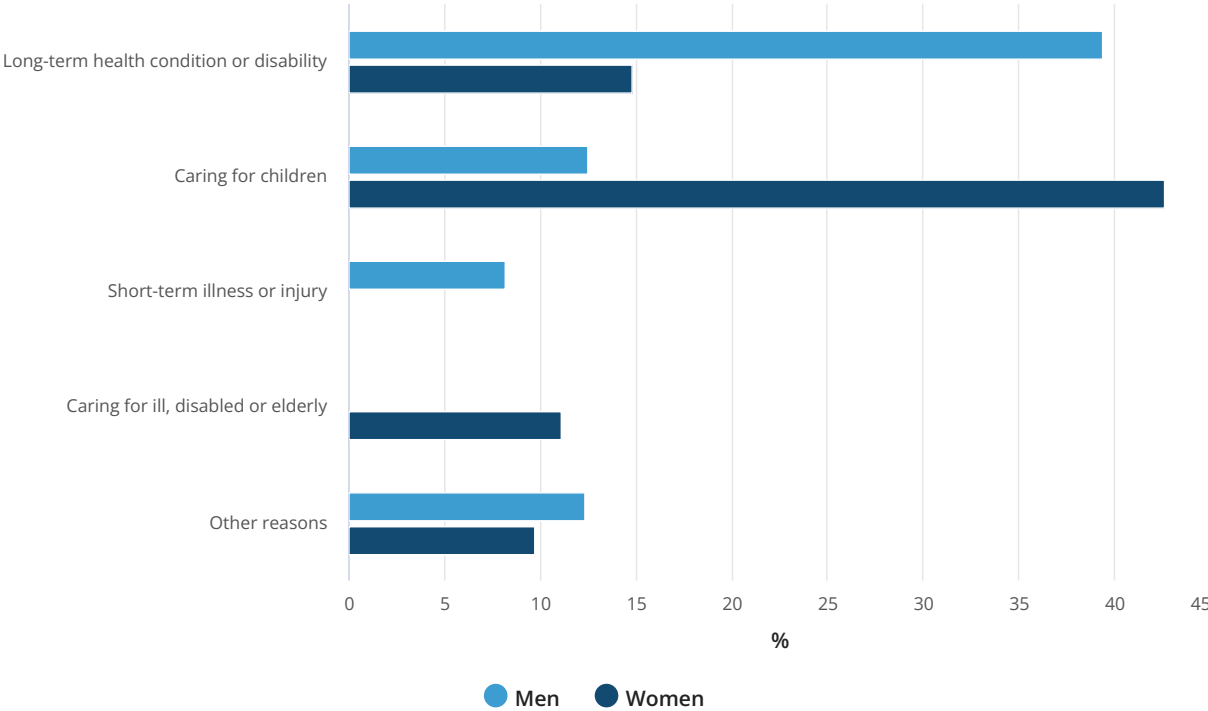
People who wanted a job

In 2024-25, there were 1.2 million people who did not work but wanted a job. Determining whether these people were available to start work is important because those who are available are more likely to move into employment than those who are not available.

Of the 1.2 million people who wanted a job, 1.1 million (89%) were available either immediately or within four weeks and 129,400 (11%) were not available within four weeks, down from 183,300 in 2023-24.

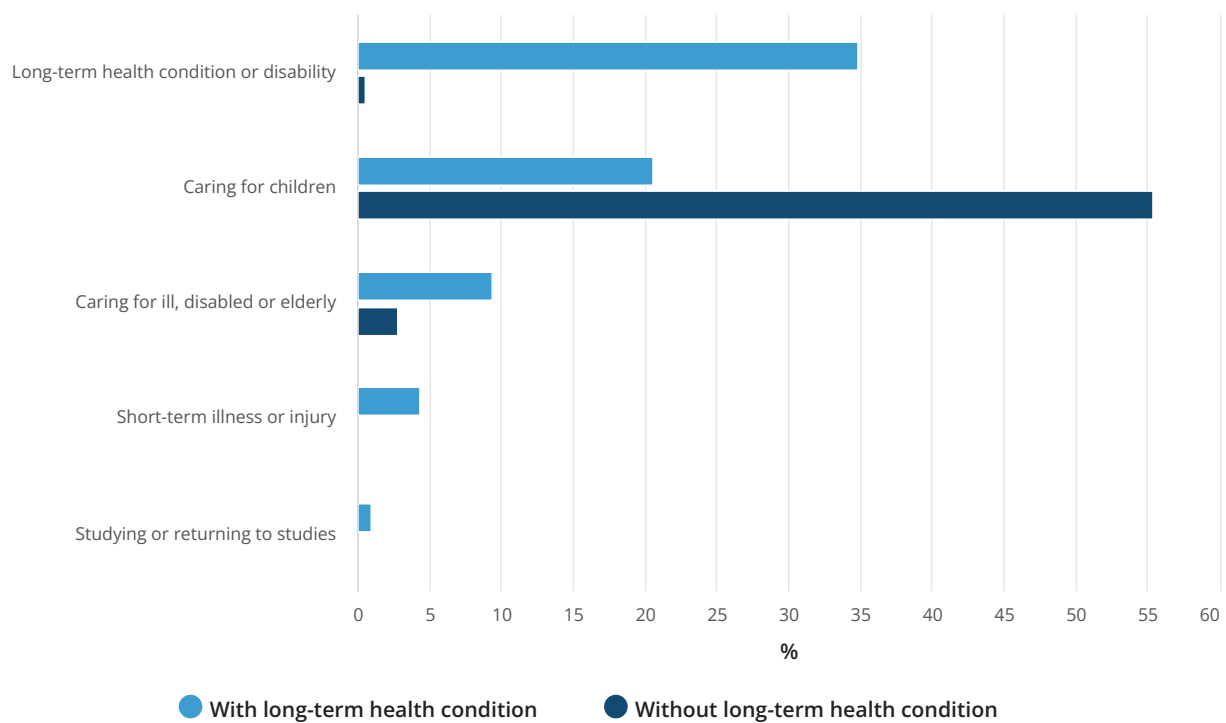
- The main reason women were unavailable to start work was still 'Caring for children' (43%), down from 44% in 2023-24. This was higher for mothers with children under 15 years (70%).
- The main reason men were unavailable to start work was 'Long-term health condition or disability' (39%).
- For those with a long-term health condition, 35% indicated their main reason was 'Long-term health condition or disability', down from 37% in 2023-24.

Graph 2 - Main reason not available to start a job(a), Sex



(a) Availability refers to the reference week (last week) or within four weeks.

Graph 3 - Main reason not available to start a job(a), Long-term health condition(b)



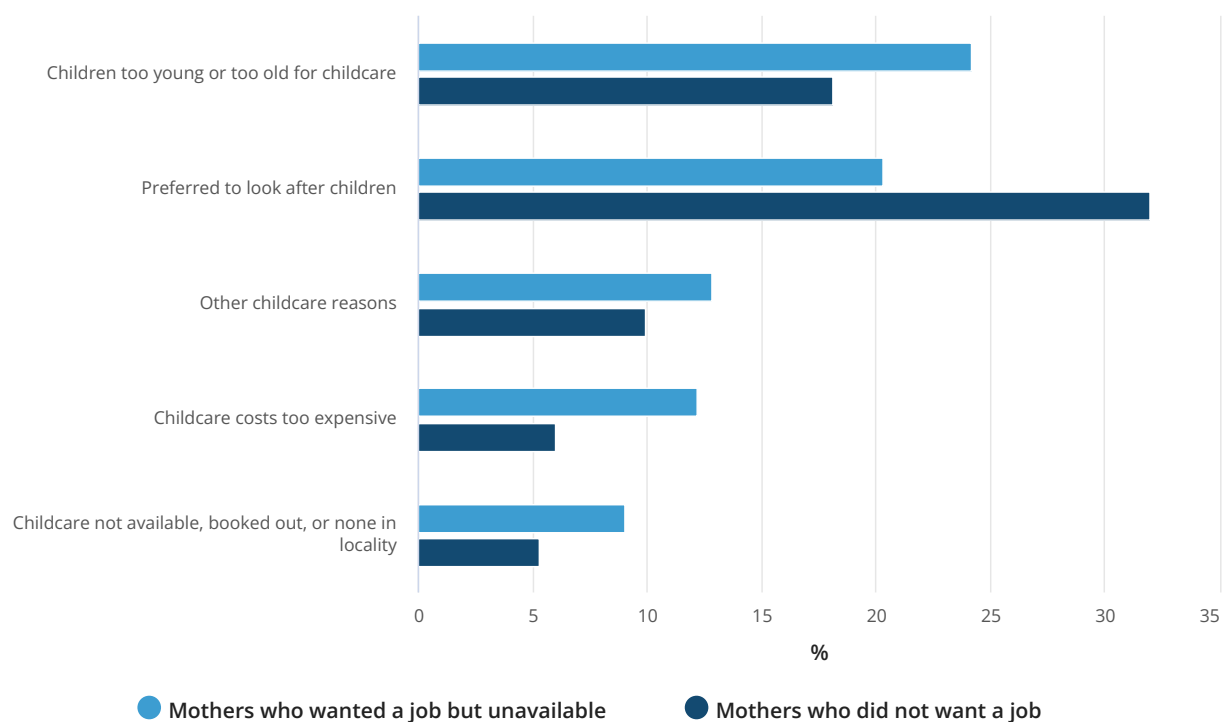
(a) Availability refers to the reference week (last week) or within four weeks.

(b) People with a long-term health condition are based on their responses to questions related to identifying a range of health conditions. This is asked separately from the main reason why they are not available to work or work more hours, and they are able to choose a main reason other than 'long-term health condition or disability'.

The main reasons provided by mothers who indicated childcare was the main reason they were unavailable included:

- Children too young or too old for childcare (24%), up from 17% in 2023-24
- Preferred to stay home and look after their children (20%), up from 16% in 2023-24

Graph 4 - Main childcare reasons mothers(a) were unavailable to start a job(b)



(a) Mothers refers to women with children aged under 15 years.
 (b) Availability refers to the reference week (last week) or within four weeks.

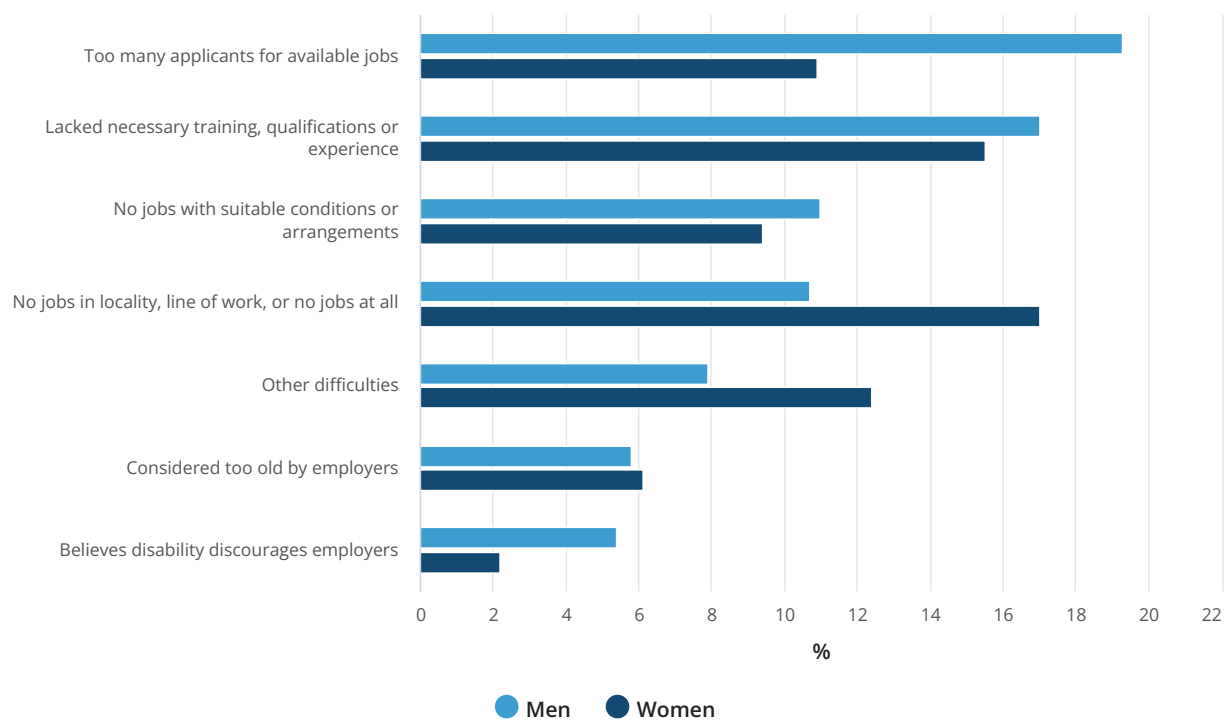
Difficulty finding a job

Of the 1.1 million people who wanted a job and were available to start, just over half (54%) were looking for work (566,900).

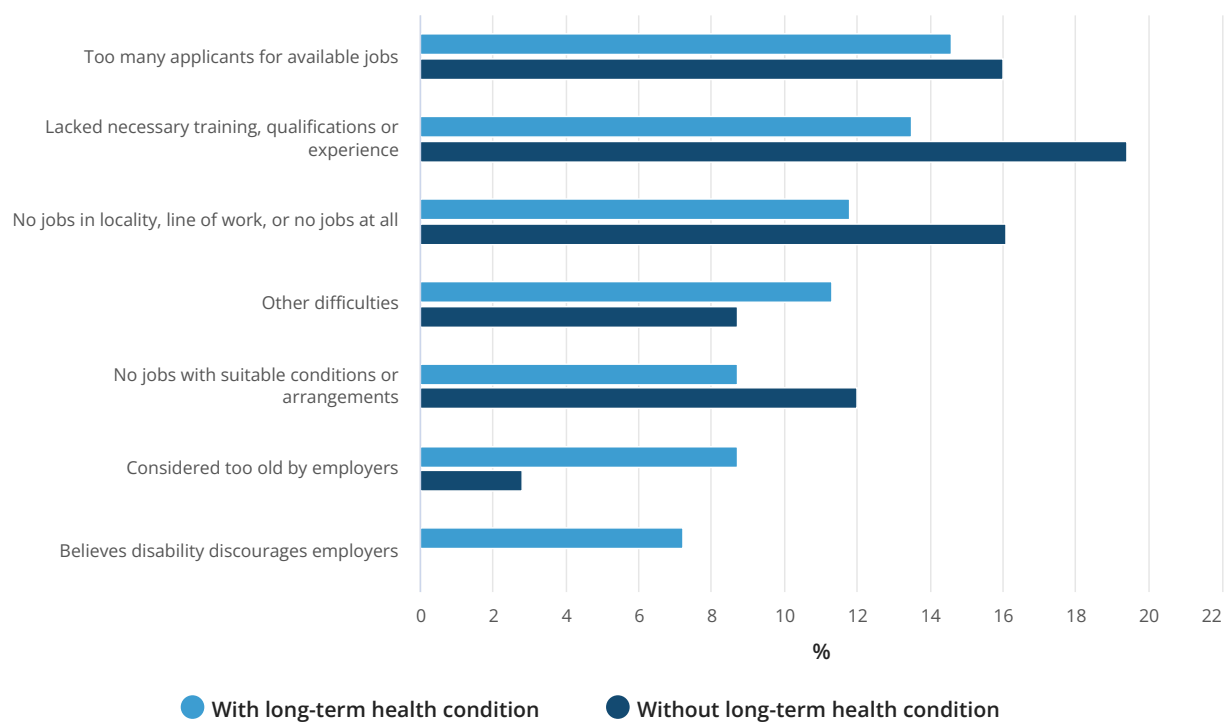
The main difficulties reported for finding work included:

- Lacked necessary training, qualifications or experience – 16%, up from 11% in 2023-24
- Too many applicants for available jobs – 15%, down from 18% in 2023-24
- No jobs in locality, line of work, or no jobs at all – 14%, up from 9% in 2023-24

Graph 5 - Main difficulty in finding a job, Sex



Graph 6 - Main difficulty in finding a job, Long-term health condition



People available and looking

Of the 566,900 people who wanted a job, and who were available and looking:

- 481,000 (85%) were unemployed.
- 85,900 (15%) were not in the labour force (these people were not classified as unemployed because they were not available to start work in the reference week, but were available to start within 4 weeks or were only passively looking for work).

People available and not looking

There were 487,000 people who wanted a job, were available within four weeks but were not looking. 57% of these people were women and they commonly reported that 'Caring for Children' (14%) and 'Studying or returning to studies' (7%) were the main reasons for not looking for a job. The main reasons for men were 'Studying or returning to studies' (17%) and 'No need to work' (11%).

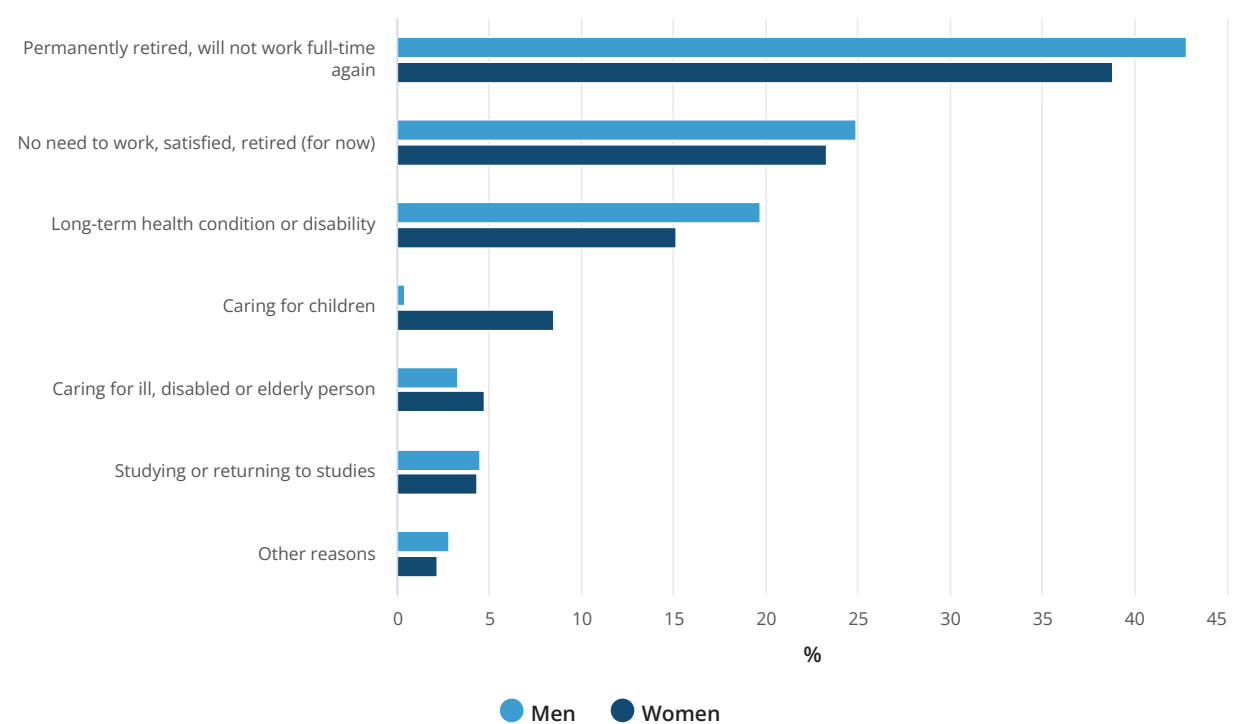
People who did not want to work

In 2024-25, around 5.6 million people aged 18 years and over who were not in the labour force reported that they did not want a job.

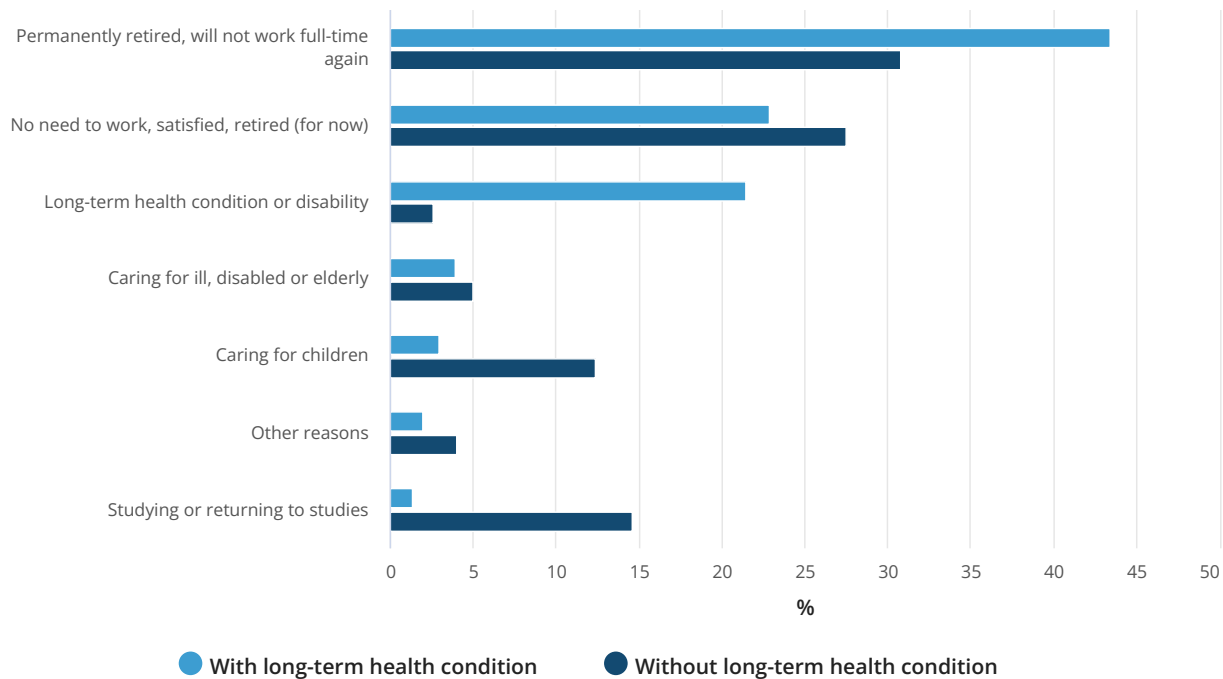
The main reasons people not in the labour force did not want a job included:

- Permanently retired, will not work full-time again (41%)
- No need to work, satisfied, retired (for now) (24%)
- Long-term health condition or disability (17%)

Graph 7 - Main reason people not in the labour force did not want a job, Sex



Graph 8 - Main reason people not in the labour force did not want a job, Long-term health condition(a)

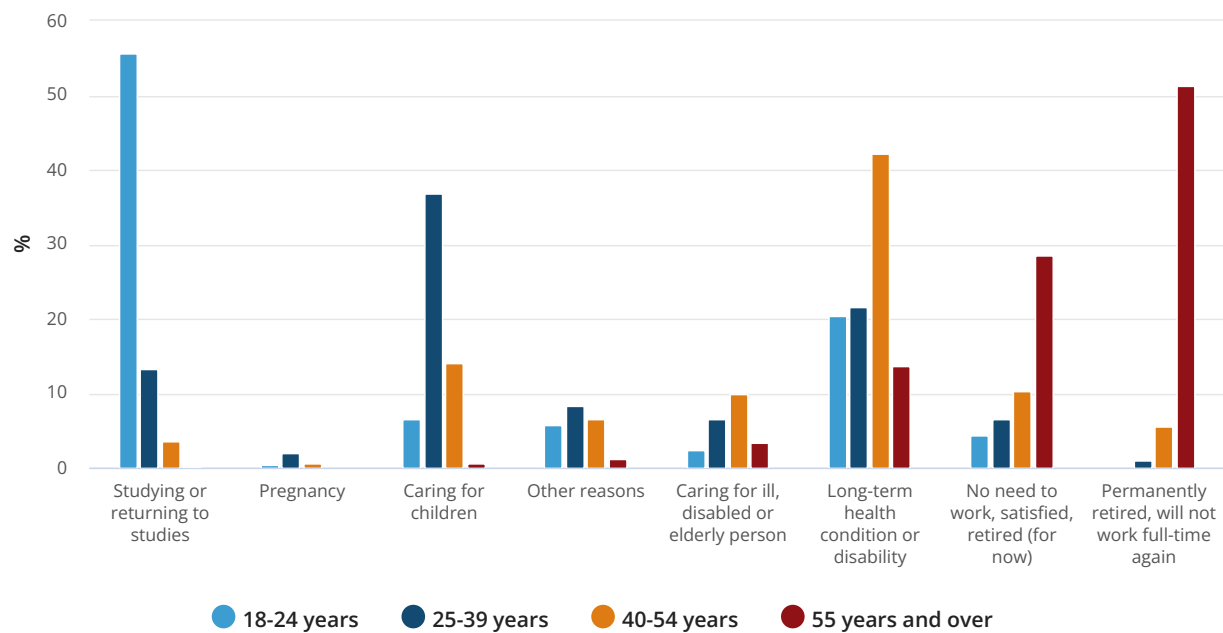


(a) People with a long-term health condition are based on their responses to questions related to identifying a range of health conditions. This is asked separately from the main reason why they do not want to work or work more hours, and they are able to choose a main reason other than 'long-term health condition or disability'.

The main reason people not in the labour force did not want a job varies at different stages of life:

- For people aged 18-24 years - Studying or returning to studies (56%).
- For people aged 25-39 years - Caring for children (37%).
- For people aged 40-54 years - Long-term health condition or disability (42%).
- For people aged 55 years and over - Permanently retired, will not work full-time again (51%).

Graph 9 - Main reason people not in the labour force did not want a job, Age

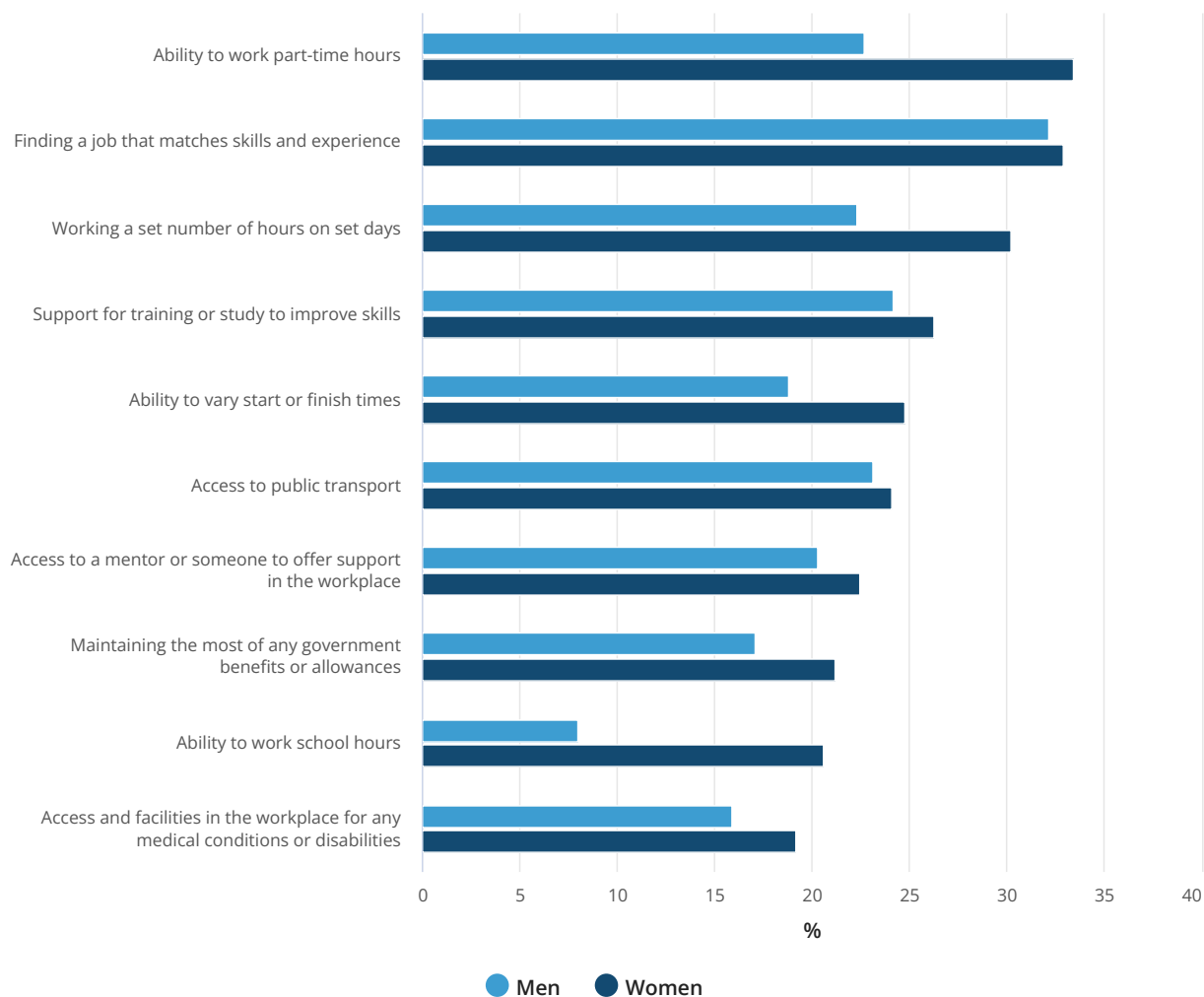


Incentives to work

Of the 3.2 million people who did not have a job in 2024-25, the most important factor associated with either returning to or commencing work was 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience', which was rated as 'Very important' by 33% of people.

- For women, the most important factor was 'Ability to work part-time hours' (33%), followed by 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (33%).
- For men, the most important factor was 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (32%), followed by 'Support for training or study to improve skills' (24%).

Graph 10 - Incentives(a), Sex



(a) People who rated the incentives as 'Very important'.

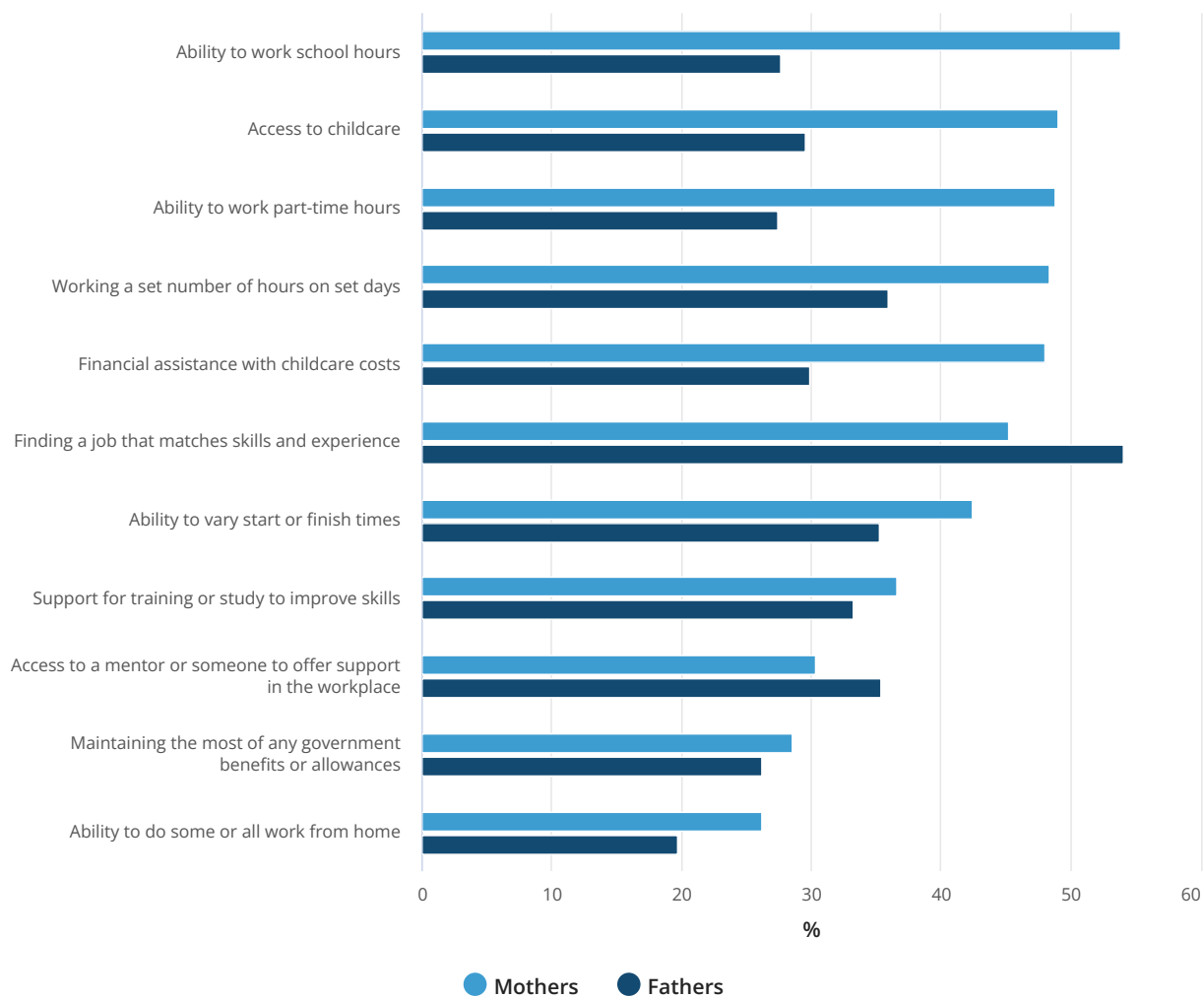
Parents with children under 15

There were 691,300 parents aged 18-75 years with children under 15 who were not working.

Of the 560,500 mothers, the most important factor associated with either returning to or commencing work was 'Ability to work school hours' (54%).

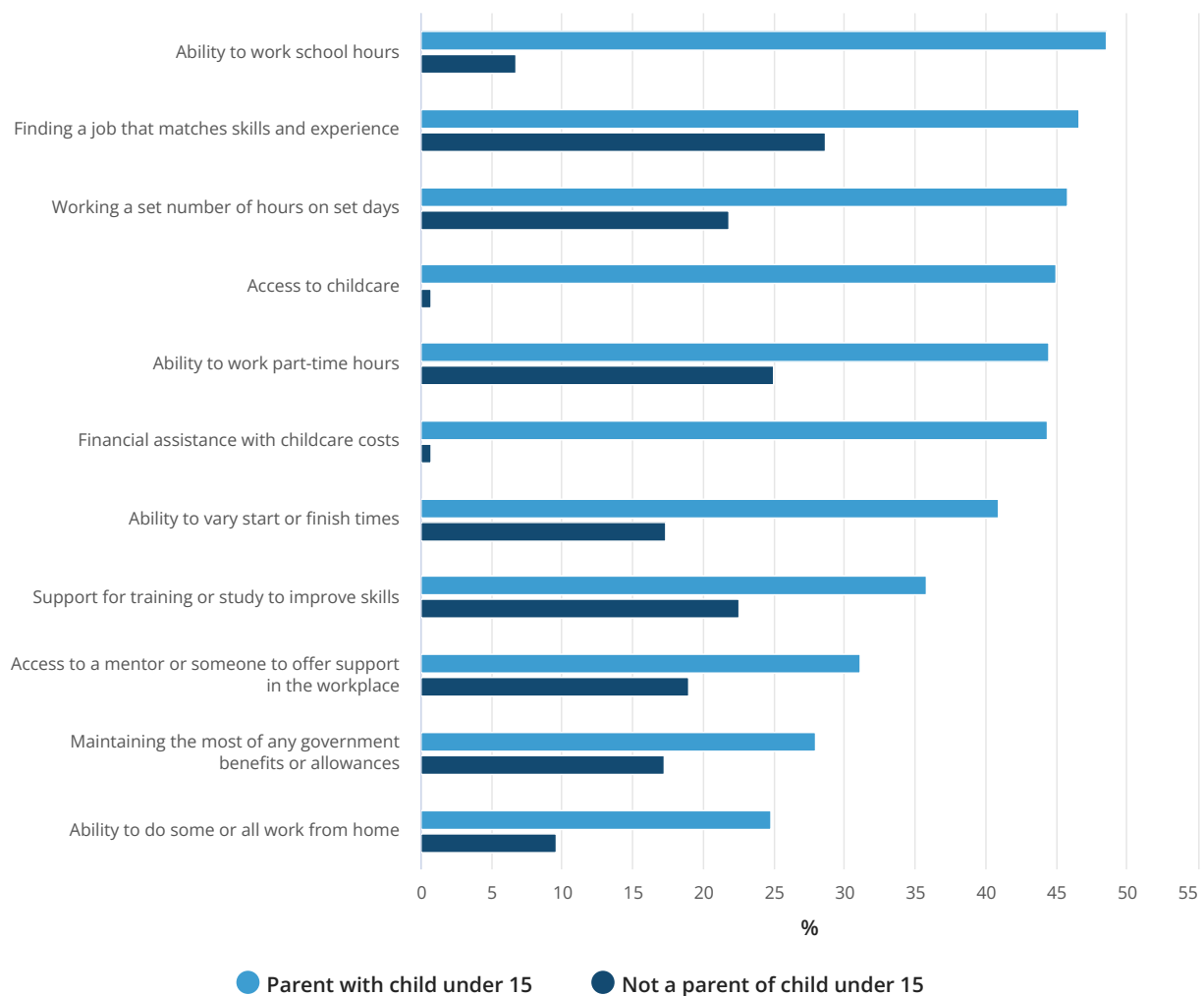
Of the 130,700 fathers, the most important factor associated with either returning to or commencing work was 'Finding a job that matches skills and experience' (54%).

Graph 11 - Incentives(a), Mothers and Fathers with children under 15



(a) People who rated the incentives as 'Very important'.

Graph 12 - Incentives(a), Parents with children under 15



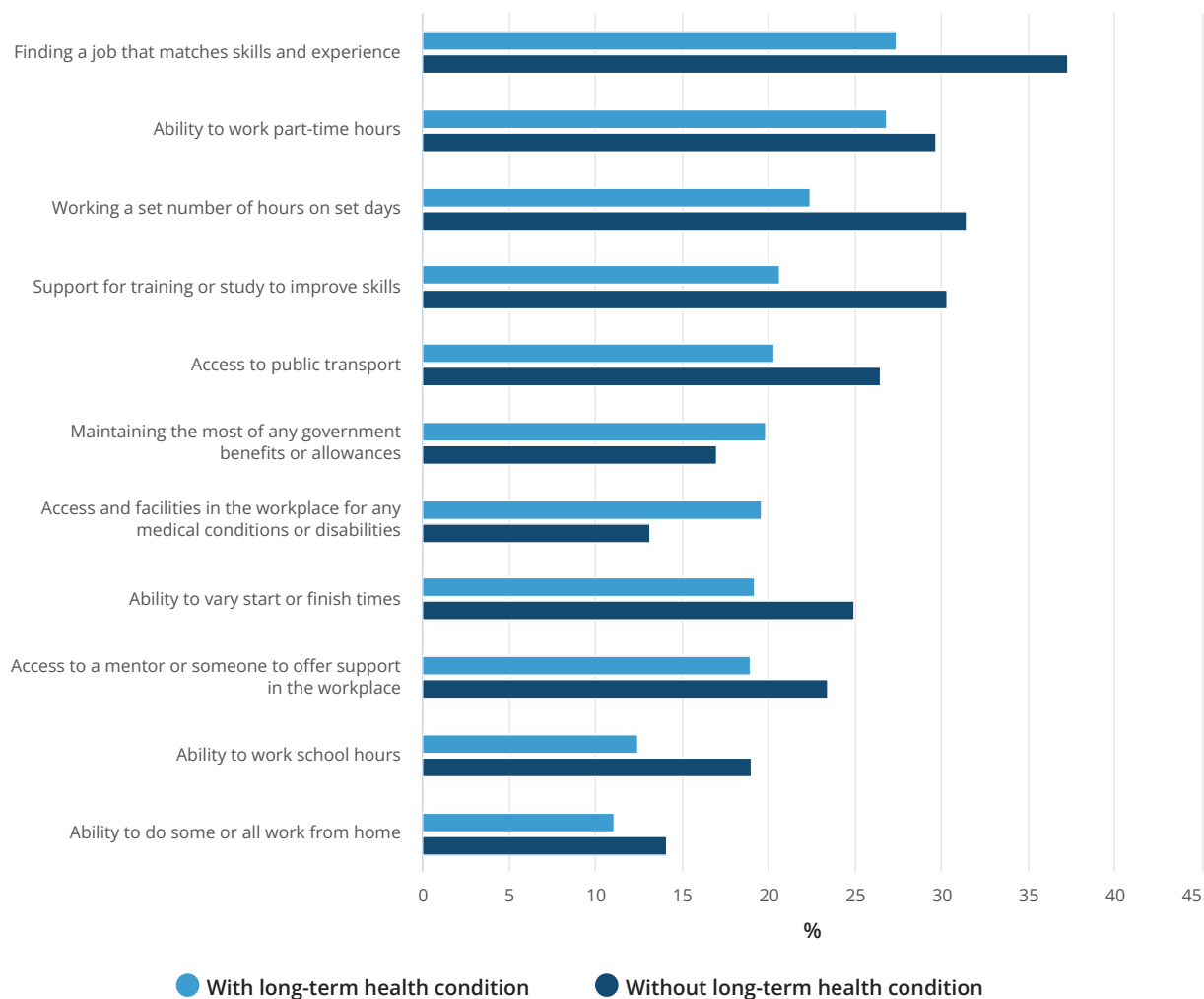
(a) People who rated the incentives as 'Very important'.

Long-term health conditions

There were 2.0 million people who were not working and had a long-term health condition.

The most important factors associated with either returning to or commencing work for people with a long-term health condition were the 'Finding a job that matches their skills and experience' (rated very important by 29%), followed by 'Ability to work part-time hours' (rated very important by 28% of people).

Graph 13 - Incentives(a), Long-term health condition



(a) People who rated the incentives as 'Very important'.

Part-time workers

In 2024-25, of the 19 million people aged 18 to 75 years, 4.2 million usually worked part-time. Of these, 801,600 (19%) preferred to work more hours. There were 1.1 million part-time employed people who were working less than 16 hours a week, of whom 26% would prefer to work more hours.

Table 1 - People aged 18-75 years, Employed part-time by preference for more hours

	Usually works 0-15 hours	Usually works 16-34 hours
Would like to work more hours	289,700 (26%)	511,900 (16%)
Did not want more hours	822,600 (74%)	2,602,600 (84%)
Total	1,112,300	3,114,500

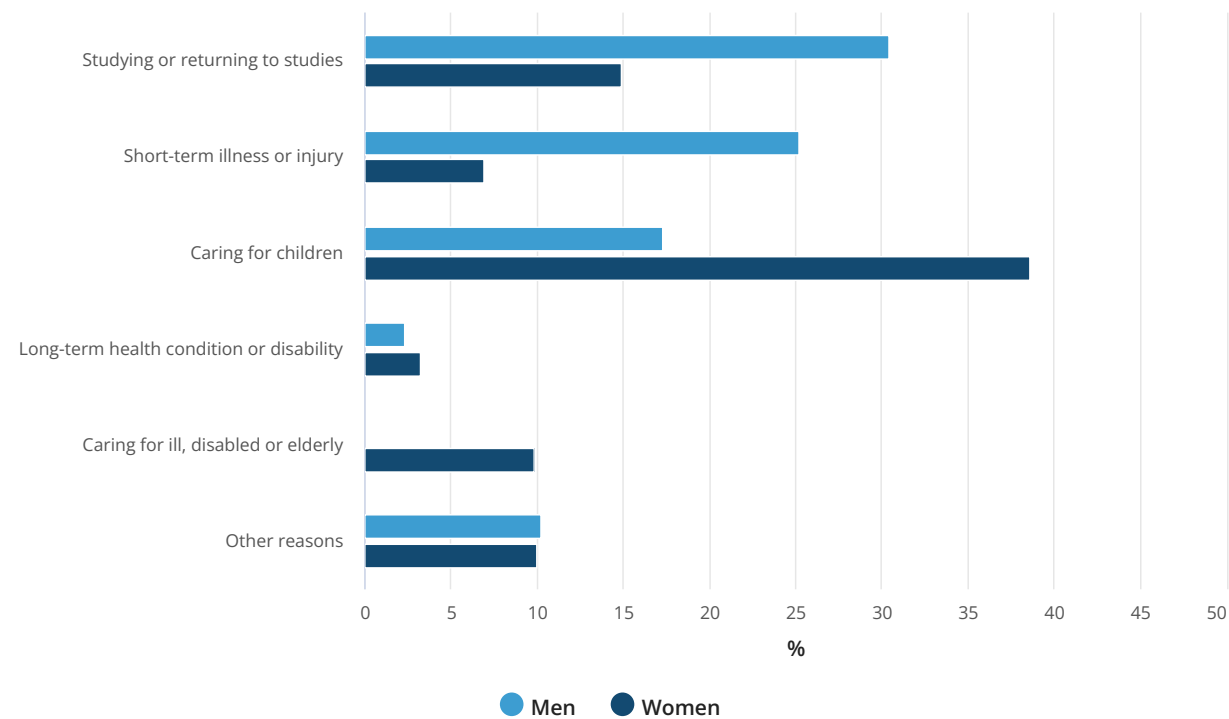
People who wanted more hours

Of the 801,600 people who worked part time and wanted more hours, 89% were available to start working more hours within four weeks.

Of the 87,900 people who weren't available within four weeks, the main reasons they weren't available were:

- Caring for children (36%)
- Studying or returning to studies (22%)
- Short-term illness or injury (14%)

Graph 14 - Main reason not available to work more hours(a), Sex



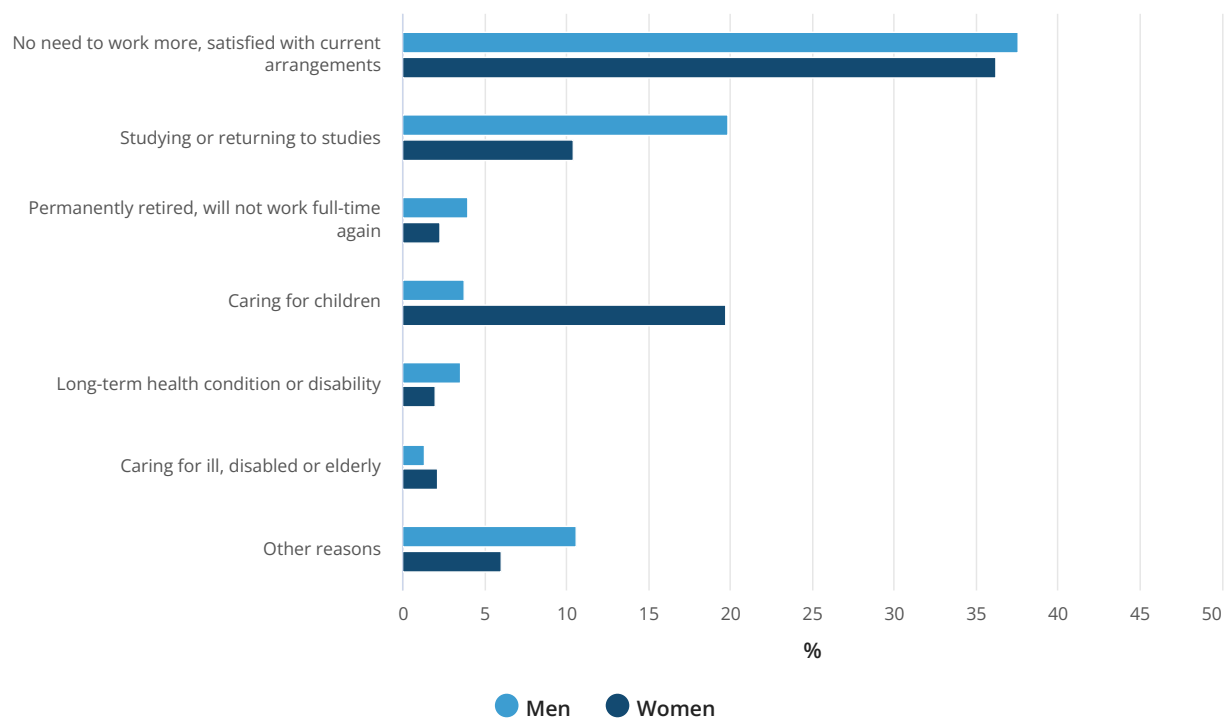
(a) Availability refers to the reference week (last week) or within four weeks.

People who did not want more hours

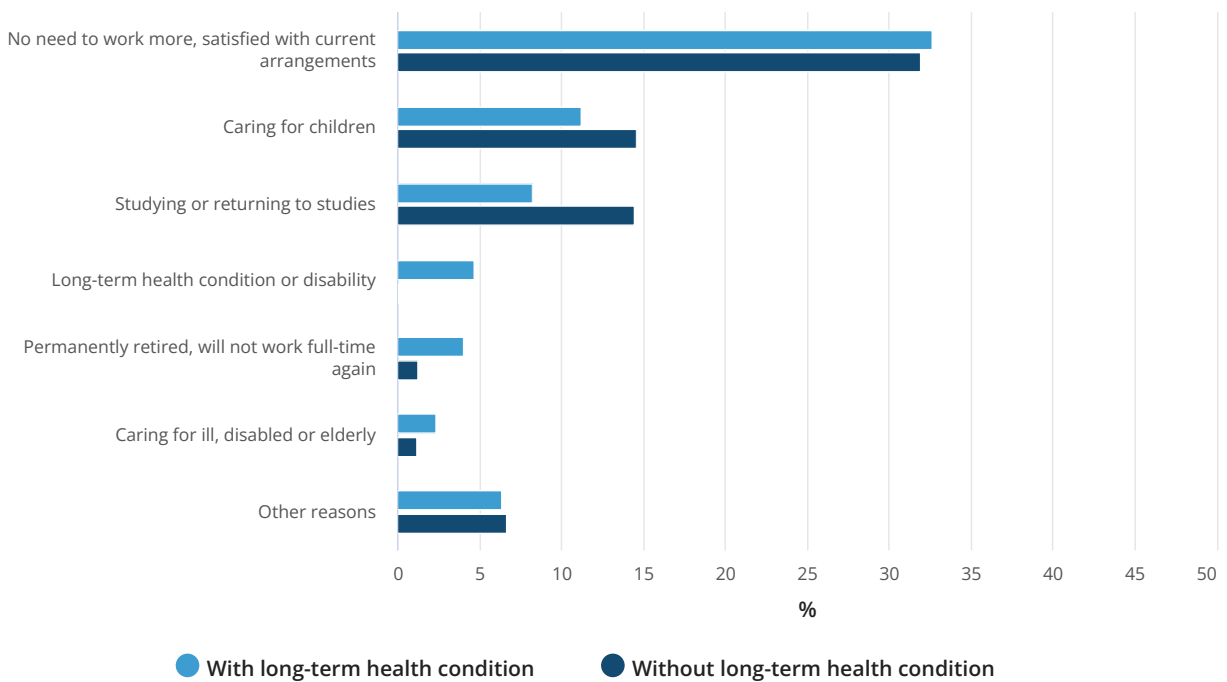
For people who usually worked part-time, the main reason for not wanting more hours included:

- No need to work more, satisfied with current arrangements (45%)
- Caring for children (18%)
- Studying or returning to studies (16%)

Graph 15 - Main reason people working part-time did not want to work more hours, Sex



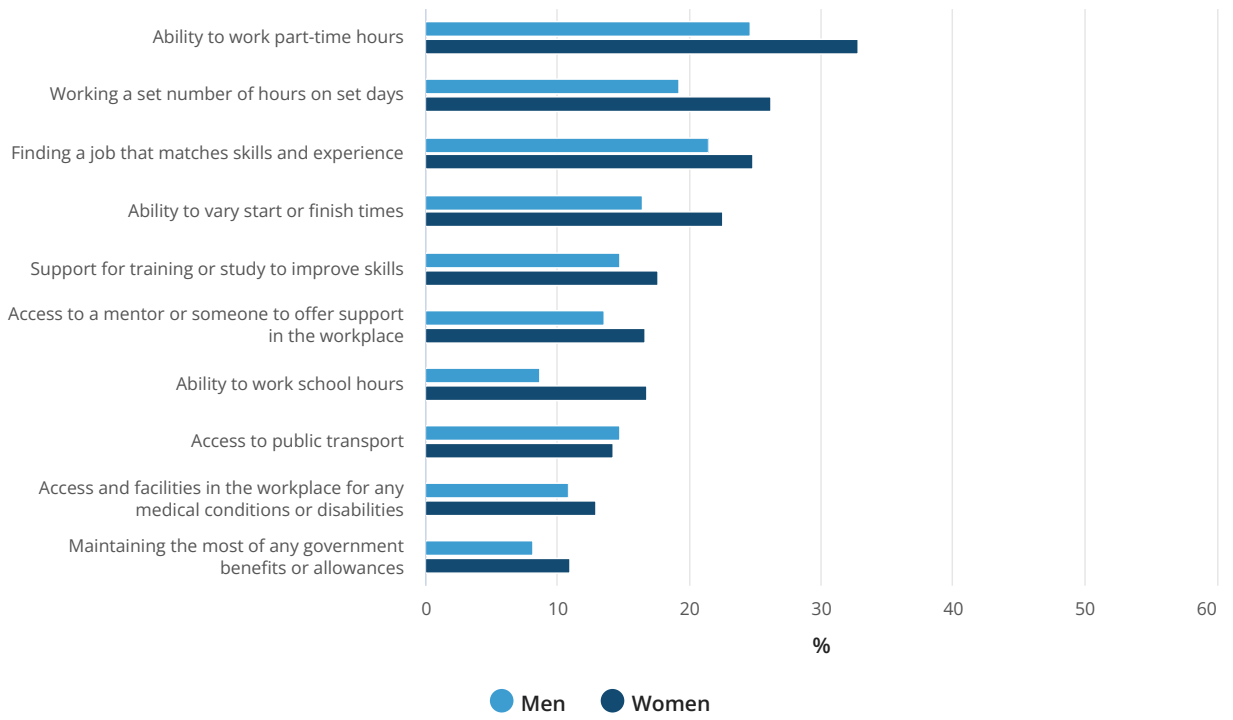
Graph 16 - Main reason people working part-time did not want to work more hours, Long-term health condition



Incentives to work more hours

The main factor that may influence part-time workers to work more hours was being able to increase their hours while continuing to work part-time, rated as very important by 52% of people. This was followed by 'Working a set number of hours on set days', at 41%.

Graph 17 - Incentives to work more hours, Sex



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Table 5. Reasons not looking for work or more hours

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Table 6. Difficulties finding work or more hours

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Table 8. Preferred hours of part-time workers

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Table 9. Reasons not wanting to work or work more hours

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Table Q6. Reasons for not wanting to work or more hours

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Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6239.0.

Methodology

[Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia methodology, 2024-25 financial year](#)